process of objectively structural clinical examination in the country for the first time after their final written exam which will not only be different from traditional practice but also be purposeful and transparent as well in addition to forensic and ENT, ophthalmology, paediatrics, gynaecology, orthopaedic have also been included in the same;

(b) if so, the outline of this new arrangement; and

(c) to what extent students and patients would be benefited as a result thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI A. RAJA): (a) Yes, Sir. The practice of objective structured clinical examination has been introduced for medical students seeking DNB degree for post graduation in the subjects of ENT and Forensic Medicine alongwith conventional examination. This system will be further extended in the specialities of Ophthalmology, Paediatrics, Gynaecology, Orthopaedic etc. in due course.

(b) and (c) This is an objective method of assessing the clinical skills of the students, which is transparent and therefore has greater acceptability among students and teachers. In this system students are examined in a group. The number may vary from 22 to 30 and as per requirements a numbers of clinical stations are prepared. Each station deals with one aspect of the clinical problem with a pre-determined questions and marks. The students have to visit all the stations one by one for answering similar questions at all stations. The process thus brings in objectivity in the assessment of students as the bias factor is contained. Any objective examination procedure will ultimately improve the patient care in the long run.

Restriction on cigarette smoking

749. SHRI RAJU PARMAR: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether in spite of increasing the taxes and banning advertising of cigarettes the number of smokers in the country has increased;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the domestic demand of cigarettes has increased by about five per cent during the last year; and

(d) if so, whether Government propose to restrict the manufacturers of cigarette to produce limited quantity and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI A. RAJA): (a) to (d) As per information received from the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, sales of cigarettes have increased by 5.7% in 2002-03 after a decline of 11% during the previous year. The Government has been taking various administrative steps and undertaking IEC activities to regulate and discourage smoking. Also a comprehensive legislation titled "The Cigarettes and other Tabacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003" has been enacted this year, which intends to discourage the use of tobacco products through various control measures like total ban on advertisement of tobacco products, prohibition of smoking in public places and ban on sale of tobacco products to persons below 18 years of age. However, at this stage, there is no proposal to impose any restriction on the manufacture of cigarettes.

Free treatment for poor in private hospitals

†750. SHRIMATI PREMA CARIAPPA:
SHRI MOTILAL VORA:

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Apollo Hospital and other private hospitals were allotted land on concessional rates on the condition that they would provide free treatment to the poor;

(b) whether it is also a fact that so far these hospitals have not provided free treatment to the poor;

(c) whether it is also a fact that Apollo Hospital has expressed its inability to provide free treatment to the poor;

(d) if so, Government's reaction thereto; and

(e) whether Government would formulate uniform policy for all private hospitals?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.